The Indian Stage

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OUR PRESIDENTIAL ELEVATION

The event of the last month, the one event of importance and interest to us and our readers and to South India at large in recent times, was the appointment of the Hon'ble Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer to be an ordinary member of the Council of His Excellency the Governor of Madras. When the daily papers of the 16th of January announced to unexpectant Madras, the news of his appointment in the place of the Maharajah of Bobbili who had resigned and when on the day following, the usual salute of guns proclaimed to the public the fact of his having taken charge of the duties of that high office, it was felt that Britannia could give no more convincing pledge of her friendship and love for Mother India. The practical recognition of the principle involved in the appointment is certain to mark an era of peace, contentment and progress in the country.

The Hon'ble Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer has been the President of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha for several years past and there is therefore reason for peculiar gratification on our part. That this gentleman who has now been elevated to one of the highest offices under the Crown, is a man of the highest character, an eminent lawyer, a leader among men or even a sincere and loyal patriot, is not perhaps so very much to our present purpose, as that in him we have always recognised a true and munificent patron of arts and letters.

He discerned long ago with the unerring judgment of a practical philosopher, the important function of the drama and the stage in the life and education of a community. He believes in the full measure of influence which the stage is calculated to contribute to the development of healthy public tone and spirit. He may yet cherish a faith in its having a future and a mission. We have therefore great pleasure in tendering our sincerest felicitations to him on his elevation to the exalted office—to him, to the council and to the country.

It would be an impertinence to seek to estimate a career which in many respects is perhaps just beginning. But we have no doubt that when the story of his life comes to be told, it will be found to be full of inspiration and example. One of the great secrets of his life has been that he is a great believer. He would appear to have begun by believing in God and in himself. He is a fighter, born. It may indeed be said of him that he has picked up with the point of his sword all the laurels he has won. His life has been heroic. From the start, his career has been vouchsafed by himself. Even those who know him well, perhaps know not the severe self-discipline of his development. His opitimism is naturally refreshing and contagious.

A high purpose would be seen to have governed and directed the course of his conscious endeavour almost from the commencement. To him as to every man walking straight and stiff on the road, way was often made almost automatically. His high character and sublime simplicity of life are an impeachment on certain dominant

tendencies of the present day. To such a man the call to such high and responsible office always comes as a rare opportunity.

We have no doubt that in his new place the Hon'ble Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer will find a more practical if somewhat restricted scope for the many qualities which have served to win for him the respect, admiration and leadership of the public. May he be spared long to render noble and signal service to the land he loves so well and wisely. May it be given to him to play a splendid and inspiring part in the great Drama which is at the present day being enacted in this country. May the intellectual splendour of such a life, the self-determination of its career, its carriage, its high character, its purity and almost stoic simplicity, its devotion to public good and its essential religiousness, imbue by its inspiring example, generations of youth and of public men in this ancient land of ours.

THE HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE P. R. SUNDARA IYER

To the Hon'ble Mr. Justice P. R. Sundara Iyer, another gentleman, who, as a member for several years, has been evincing sincere interest in the work of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha, it is also our privilege to accord our hearty felicitations on his elevation to the Bench of our High Court. It is possible to perceive a peculiar appropriateness in his being appointed to the place vacated by the Hon'ble Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer. Two of the keenest competitors in the profession which they both adorned, the noble friendship between them and the association of both their names in public mind and life during the last two decades are an interesting commentary on Madras Society. They both shared many of the qualities which make for success, distinction and even true greatness. A study of the lives of these two distinguished sons of Southern India will furnish abundant material for the illustration of that action and reaction which an essentially Indian personality and character exhibits in the pursuit of the profession of the law. It seems a natural fruition that an eminent lawyer who has spent the earlier years of his life in making the worse appear the better reason, should be called upon in the afternoon of his life to make the best prevail. We have no doubt that the Hon'ble Mr. Justice P. R. Sundara Iyer will fully sustain the high traditions of the race of great Indian Judges who were the first to convince our rulers of the capacity and therefore the right of India's sons to participate in the administration and government of their country. We also trust that, now in the service of the crown he has necessarily to withdraw himself entirely from various activities, he may be able to guide and support others, which also may be discerned to be movements in the service and advancement of the county.

OUR LOOKOUT

The Christmas season in Madras has been full of Dramatic activity. The amateurs have been quite busy as usual. The professionals have also been active.

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It is, however, to be regretted that neither for the professionals nor for the amateurs such a season is propitiate for fresh achievements. It is essentially a season of stale repetitions. The demand for entertainment of some sort or another is so pressing, especially from those who go to the metropolis from the mofussil, that dramatic societies and companies have

to strain all their resources to provide the amusement.

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It is not that we despise repetitions or consider all repetitions stale. On the other hand we have always regretted that it should not be found feasible, even in the case of first class amateur dramatic societies which do not work on commercial lines, to have the same play repeated a sufficient number of times so as to prevent the enormous waste of time and money, labour and talent, that is involved in the present system of performing a drama only once or at most three or four times in succession. In the result, not merely is there a great and uneconomic waste, but owing to the small number of chances given and the limited provision for accommodation in our so-called theatres, large sections of the community get no opportunity whatever of witnessing the performances and it is only the same identical body that constitutes the audience at every performance.

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It may indeed be answered that in this country there is as yet no demand for any long run of the same play, night after night or week after week. No one who has not tried the experiment has a claim to be heard on the point. And no one who has never tried to provide the supply should be at liberty to talk glibly of there being no demand. We cannot think that human nature in India is far different to what it is seen to be elsewhere.

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In any case it may be as well for us to remember that more often than not the supply itself creates the demand. And we are not at all sure that the announcement by some of our leading amateur dramatic societies of a run of the same play for a time, will not be followed by a reaction and response in the community more than adequate to justify the attempt.

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And then again, there is the special investment that would willingly be made on the staging of a play which is from the first intended to be run and repeated for a time. Such investment and the attendant preparation would naturally improve the quality of performances and this in turn would serve to swell the demand.

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There is also another distinct advantage in the 'run' system. Both in the acting of characters and in the equipment of the stage there is much that the experience of previous nights might teach us to provide for or avoid. Under the present system of single nights the entire experience is lost and wasted and not even noted and remembered for any subsequent repetition.

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Distant repetitions are in some respects even worse than first nights; because the actors and managers go to work with a carelessness that is demoralising in a large degree.

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We do not however wish to be understood as suggesting that a 'run' system has not its peculiar disadvantages or evils. But of that some other time.

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We are glad to think that the advent of the social drama on our stage wlll soon be followed by the reformation of the romantic drama if not also by its entire disappearance.

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The social drama in this country has a great future before it.

THE SOCIAL DRAMAS OF IBSEN—I

BY MR. GEORGE JOSEPH, M.A.
Bar-at-Law.

At the close of the last century three Continental writers stood head and shoulders above the rest, dividing amongst themselves the allegiance of the critical minds of Europe. Tolstoi was a novelist who had repented of his novels and forsworn all art as evil. He has recently passed away—the exponent of a Philosophy which is the negation of the fundamentals of European Statesmanship. Nietzche was a philosopher who repudiated all morality and glorified the big blonde beast, lustful and a fighter, as the Overman; he was an anarchist in a much more radical way than Tolstoi; but he died mad in 1900. Henrik Ibsen was a playwright whose imaginative supremacy was of the order of Voltaire and Goethe and Victor Hugo but whose final philosophy was as individualistic but not so constructive as that of Tolstoi or Nietzche. Ibsen's limitations were pathetic in some things and the story Gosse relates of him is significant. "Of Tolstoi he had read with contemptuous disapproval only some of the polemical pamphlets. He said to me in 1899 of the Great Russian—'Tolstoi—he is mad' with a screwing up of the features such as a child makes at the thought of a black draught."

Ibsen's was a hard life. Born in 1828 in Skein of fairly well-to do parents, he was happy and comfortable till his eighth year when his father became a bankrupt. His early taste was for painting but he was prohibited from indulging in this fancy by the stern necessity of having to make a living for himself. At sixteen he was apprenticed to an apothecary but he did not take kindly to the life of "plasters and pills and ointment boxes." He was not popular and was always getting into trouble with his caricatures and satires of local celebrities. In 1848, in his twenty-first year he wrote his first play "Catiline"—a tragedy in three acts of blank verse. There are the rudiments in it of his later and more mature work but the play itself has no interest except in relation to the Ibsen of later years. Three other plays were produced before his twenty-sixth year—all forgotten; but they had the effect of wedding him to the literary life. "Lady Inger of Ostraat" was published in 1854—a strong historical tragedy which I can only mention in passing. The tragic development is remarkable, but Ibsen's art is still in its nonage. "The Feasting at Solhug" and "The Vikings at Helgeland" and "the Pretenders" complete Ibsen's catalogue of the historical and legendary dramas. In the first of these Ibsen is still the slave of convention and he has not faced life in reality. But the play is interesting in another way—it has in it for the first time Ibsen's favourite device of hinging the action of a piece on the love of one man by two women—a strong and a gentle one. In "The Vikings at Helgeland," the same situation recurs and the play is one about which I would like to say a good deal. It is a magnificent tragedy conceived in the true Greek spirit—with the Hellenic delight in strength and beauty and the inevitableness of the tragic in human life. But my space is limited and I must pass on.

Ibsen began his career as a writer of Social Dramas as long ago as 1862 with the "Comedy of Love" which was his first attack on Love and Marriage. The vehicle of the play is rhymed verse

which is described by those who know the play in the original as astonishingly vivid and vivacious. It is a Comedy less of incidents than of ideas. The scene is a country house and the characters, modern men and women,—a lawyer, students, a Solicitor's clerk, Falk the pessimistic hero, Svanhild the first of the many wonderful women of Ibsen's creation, John Strawman a stupid parson and his wife and a large family. The thesis of the play, for it has got one, is simply this, Love dies out amid the vulgar association of betrothal and marriage and family life. Young men and women are happy as long as their love is their own peculiar and treasured possession and not a thing for the public. Once a couple are betrothed, Society with its vulgarity, respectability, and general officiousness interferes with congratulations and counsel and—kills the love out. The Solicitor's Clerk is engaged and confesses he was in the habit of writing love poems before he was betrothed. This confession scandalises the whole country house. The final ridiculousness of love in married life is manifested by John Strawman and his wife. They are the very patterns of respectability but the idea of their loving one another as they did when society had nothing to do with their concerns is almost a scandalous thing. Marriage kills love: it brings you down from the ecstasies of the lovers' rapture and lands you in the prosiness and dullness of family life. The fate is a humdrum one and anything is well done which would rescue us from a moral tragedy of that nature. Convention kills the love of married people and is it not well to escape the situation? This is the real problem of modern Marriage Ibsen seems to say. Out of this society emerge Falk and Svanhild who dare to achieve a grand act of self-sacrifice for the sake of their love. Love cannot live under modern conditions and so they resolve to part for the sake of their love. If love cannot be a possession they would make sure that it is at least a memory unsoiled by the interference of others. There is a party of students going out into the mountains for an excursion and Falk joins them. Svanhild remains behind and as the curtain falls we see her in a heroine's austere and fearful joy. Her sister is engaged to a wholesale dealer and is congratulated by every one around. Svanhild is alone and happy.

Now it must be confessed that the final situation is rather perplexing. If Ibsen's meaning is that lovers' love is impossible in married life (with its romance and mystery and twilight gleam) we must admit he is right. But does not something else come in its stead which though not so intense and blind and foolish is still sufficient to charge life with splendid hopefulness and a unique sense of comradeship and affection? A friendship like that is worth something when all is said and done. Ibsen in short missed the reality of this joy. These are only superficial observations; and my own view is that a deeper analysis is possible and necessary for the understanding of Ibsen. As an artist he had a constructive genius of the highest order but as a philosopher he was a mere wanton destroyer. He did not pretend to construct. I shall have something to say about this matter in my concluding observations and shall therefore reserve my remarks till then.

The immediate effect of this play on Ibsen's vogue and fortunes was curious and almost disastrous. The "Feast of

Solhoug" had secured a name for him amongst literary men and he might well have made a comfortable and popular dramatist of himself. "The Comedy of Love" brought down on him the infuriated condemnation of outraged respectability—the essential truth of the dramatist's irony added a special sting to his criticism. "The Pretenders" that followed failed to secure him public esteem and what was infinitely more important failed to get him a living. His position in Christiania as the artistic Manager of the theatre was not sufficient to enable him to make both ends meet. In September of 1863 at the age of thirty-seven he went to Rome with the aid of a government grant. It proved to be the long exile from which he returned an old and world-famous man. The time was a very hard and terrible one for him. He had himself and his family to support on next to nothing and it is probable that but for the generous assistance of Bjornsen and other friends, Ibsen would have failed and sunk.

In 1865 he sprang into sudden fame with 'Brand.' It is commonplace to speak of it as a masterpiece—it is something more than that. It is the most uncomprising challenge thrown out to the half-hearted hypocrisies and solemn patchwork of compromises so characteristic of the modern world. The scene is Norway and the period is the present. It is an ordinary village where smug respectability is the final arbiter of all issues—social and moral and religious. No one has courage enough either to assert his individuality or to rebel against the social tyranny. Red-tapeism and conventional shibboleth had smothered all generous impulses and shaped human individuality in the same mould. The village Mayor, for instance, would not give food to a starving beggar without ascertaining that he belonged to the parish. The official priest preaches a religion workable as a Sunday doctrine but totally unfitted for the rough and tumble of daily existence. It is a social tyranny all round—well meaning, respectable and proper but none the less with a fatal gift of crushing out the individuality of living and suffering men and women. Against this sombre and petty back-ground towers the enormous and morally gigantic personality of Pastor Brand. He is really a dissenting minister with a special doctrine and unique energy of his own. He sets before himself what he conceives to be Christ's goal of human endeavour and insists upon working out the consequences of the Ideal to the bitter end. He demands sacrifices from all but he does not spare himself. His only child withers away in the bleak mountain valley untouched by sunshine but he refuses to desert the scene of his call for the sake of saving his child. The child gets ill and dies. On the first anniversary of the child's death his wife is found examining the clothes and other tender momentoes of the dead one, and Brand looks on with a restless impatience whether after all the devil may not be tempting him even in these things. Just then a gypsy beggar woman enters and asks for warm covering for her naked babe and Brand insists upon his wife handing over the clothes of their dead child for protecting the vagrant babe. Agnes dies of a broken heart but Brand still sticks to the post of duty and he labours amongst his people. His gospel is "All or nothing" and for a time he succeeds in casting a spell over his congregation. But finally outraged humanity protesting

with healthy vehemence against the horror of the consuming heartless doctrine, turns against Brand and he is stoned away into the mountains. Brand goes out wounded and bleeding and is finally overwhelmed by an avalanche. Brand is a tremendous play—the intense drama of a towering personality reacting on the petty vulgar surroundings of a Bourgeois world and ideals of life. Weakness and compromises are eliminated and you are face to face with a man of iron will and heart and energy daring to live out his ideals. The ideal may be too austere and lofty for mortal men, that is no concern of the artist's—but there is the clarion call of a challenge to Brand and he lives out that life evading not a whit of its bitterness or tears. "What right have we to happiness ? We must do our duty cost what may." The art of Brand is perfect and the tragedy is worked out with true dramatic instinct. Posit a character such as Pastor Brand's and also his bleak befogged surroundings, and you can't escape the last act of the play.

With Brand Ibsen came into his own, "Peer Gynt" followed in 1867 with which we have little to do. Ibsen himself described it as the antithesis to Brand—but it is too disconnected and ill developed a poem to deserve the description. It is an interesting and very significant psychological study but it is too much of an epic poem to be a coherent drama and too much of a drama to be a noble epic. It is in the Homeric vein.

"The League of Youth" came next. The drama is fairly simple, but its subsidary developments are extraordinarily complex and quite unnecessarily perplexing. It is really the story of a young democrat named Stensgaard. His ambition is to achieve political success. First he attacks with tactless vehemence the local magnate Bratesberg at a restaurant which had been left open for the public at the instance of Bratesberg himself. As a result of the perfervid and rhetorical attack, the League of Youth is founded for stealing a march on current liberalism and mortifying both parties in the state. In this state of affairs Bratesberg enters with his daughters and the ardour of Stensgaard's eloquence is quenched. But Bratesberg with a fine tact realises the situation and pretending not to notice it converses quite affably with Stensgaard and invites him to dinner. His commonplace vulgar soul is flattered and he at once feels sorry for what he has said. Dining with Bratesberg he conceives the notion of marrying one of the daughters of the house and he poses as a supporter of conservative principles. In the next act Stensgaard hears rumours doubting the solvency of Bratesberg and he straightaway goes back to the "League of Youth" and courts another lady—a rich widow. After all, the Chamberlain is found to be solvent and the rich widow is found to be poor. Poor Stensgaard's plight is pitiable and when the play closes he is under a temporary cloud. But we may be sure that he will soon be on the way to political success once more. This is one of the weakest of the plays. As a serious comedy it is helpless: a farce must always be good-natured, else the "League of Youth" might have done well as a farce. The humour is mirthless and made to turn on a pun which recurs with unnecessary frequency. It is no doubt meant as a criticism of the Liberalism of the late Sixties of the last century but it has no farther significance. Ibsen was never at home in politics and his perception of the essential inwardness

of a political issue or situation was always defective. Steinsgaard was a bad politician no doubt, but Ibsen makes him a worse joke of him.

A suggestive critic of Ibsen calls the play "a scalding satire upon the aspirations of the younger generation of Statesman." It may be scalding but so is hot water. But hot water is also dull and senseless and so is the play. The indirect effect of the play was that Ibsen and Bjornsen quarrelled, the frothy eloquence of Steinsgaard was not very unlike the rolling oratory of Bjornsen—the leader of the liberals in literature and politics.

THE DRAMA IN SOUTHERN INDIA

(BY MR. G.C.V. SHRINIVASACHARYA.)

A wave of histrionic influence has been passing over India for the past thirty years or so, and it has caused a tremendous upheaval of dramatic activity everywhere. Even villages of some importance can now boast of two and three dramatic troupes. Hence a sketch of facts and events, calculated to give some conception of the condition and the development of the drama during the past sixty years, will not be out of place in this journal.

Along with the fine arts the drama has had a fascination from my very boyhood, so much so that my elders dreaded that some day I might become an actor; and their dread became too true. Hence I believe I am not quite incompetent to speak on the subject. My experience having been mostly of South India and especially of Tamil and Telugu districts my observations are confined mainly to those parts.

Those that are acquainted with the history of the English stage and have some experience of the Indian Stage will concur with me when I say that the two stages have been similar in most points. In the early days of the English stage passion plays, such as Jesus Christ's birth and crucification and other plays of a religious nature used to be performed during religious festivals. Precisely the same has been the case with the Indian Stage. Plays having a religious tinge, such as Bhagavatam, Prahlada Natakam, Markandeya Natakam, Sita's Banishment generally called Rama Natakam and Harischandra Natakam used to be enacted on the last day of the annual festival held in honor of the presiding God or Goddess of a village. Even Sanskrit dramas, of whose staging we have not, most unfortunately, tradition even, though they must have been staged some time or other, as one could clearly see from the stage directions so precisely and cleverly given therein, contain statements to the effect that they were enacted during religious festivals. Mahakavi Bhavabhooti says in Uttara Rama Charitam "అద్య ఖలు భగవతః కాళప్రియా నాథస్య యాత్రాయాం ఆర్య మిశ్రాన్ విజ్ఞాపయామి" Yatra means festival. In Telugu it is converted into *Jatara*. The point of dissimilarity seems to be that the English religious plays were performed in closed houses and the stage-goers had to pay for admission, whereas the Indian ones were invariably held in an open space in front of the shrine of the village deity, and no fee was demanded for admission.

Before I proceed further I have to say, with the kind permission of my gentle readers, that no vernaculars of South India could boast of any play deserving the name of drama till about twenty years ago. The plays that were enacted have

been more operatic or melodramatic than really dramatic, as they are mostly made of lyrics and verses set to music and have little or no dialogues in prose. Actors in these plays sang these lyrics and also danced very often artistically, without much blundering both in music and time. It is only within the last twenty or thirty years that a few dramas sprang up, and they are mostly puerile and incorrect translations of Sanskrit or English dramas or slavish and inartistic imitations thereof. Not one genuine original drama seems to have made its appearance as yet to the best of my knowledge. It is in Sanskrit alone that we find real classical dramas in abundance, varying in shades and fashions, in ten different modes. And again no Indian language, other than Sanskrit, possesses anything like a treatise on dramaturgy. This perhaps stands much in the way of vernacular dramatic authors.

The first drama of which I have a rather glimmering idea is Valliammai Natakam in Tamil, (In Sanskrit we have a drama called Valliparinayam on the same subject). I was five years old when I witnessed it and hence my impression of it is a little indistinct. It was performed by a troupe of young men from Tanjore. I remember having been told that their music and dance were exquisite and they were rather aristocratic in their ways and demands. I also remember that the young man who impersonated Valliammai the Prima Donna, was very much petted by some of the swells. Choonambedu Arumukha Mudaliyar, a swell Zemindar in this district, and the great-grandfather of the late Mr. Muthukumaraswami Mudaliyar of happy memory, used to take him in his own palanquin. This young man, a lad of 15 or so, and another who represented Koratti (gipsy fortune-teller) and was equally young, were very handsome. They did not require razor and other artificialities and cosmetics for the face; nor did they use any false hair. A sort of wig made of black silk or velvet was used by them; it had all the ornaments worked or stuck up on it, which an Indian damsel of position and fashion would wear on the head. Thus their toilet was, so far as the chief limb was concerned, reduced to the smallest minimum. As my father was of consequence then, and I a rather precocious imp, I recollect having got that wig put on my head and admired myself to my heart's content looking at a mirror and also got admired by some flatterers who said that I looked another Valliammai. This is all I remember of this troupe. If I could see them now I would probably say that their make-up, music and dance were really good, but they knew little or nothing of drama and acting.

My next experience was with Bhagavatam in Telugu, which is now being enacted by some troupes of educated gentlemen, with all possible stage requisites, in the name of Parijatapaharanam. I must say that this play is most popular but least fitted for the stage as a drama, and I must also dilate upon it a little freely. It is most popular because those very troupes that enacted this could also enact other plays such as Jalakrida or Sri Krishna's birth and frolics with milk-maids, Markandeya Natakam and such others, and yet there was always greater demand for and more patronage to the former than all others in spite of its being least suited for the stage. The diction of Bhagavatam is quite superb, the verses and lyrics therein and especially the *Dvipadas* (ద్విపదలు) which are something like the English blank verse, are

simply lovely and quite classical. I would go the length of saying that some portions therein are far better than Sunandini Parinayam and other absurd books prescribed for University Examinations. Whether it was this diction or the exquisite music and dance of some of the actors or the appearance of Sri Krishna as the hero or all the three combined that made this opera so popular, I am unable to say. But certain it is that it was preferred to all other plays, and the band of men who staged this were called simply Bhagavatulu, though they could and did enact a dozen other plays.

There are five or six schools of Bhagavatam. The most important one is known, as Koochipoodi Bhagavatam. This used to be performed by a troupe of Brahmans belonging to the village Koochipoodi. Those actors were decently educated in Telugu, Sanskrit and Vedic lore, and their music and dance were invariably good. They were also aristocratic to some extent in their ways and demands and they observed brahminical rites regularly and systematically. The young brahman, who impersonated Satyabhama the heroine used to be accredited with special qualifications. This actor would wear 7 plaits and he would throw those 7 jatas or plaits out towards the audience on the sheet of cloth which formed the curtain that was used before an actor appeared on the arena. To wear 7 plaits was a special privilege and to throw them out towards the audience before the character actually made his appearance was more special. These two privileges meant that the actor was supreme as Satyabhama and he possesed in full the erudition Satyabhama is expected to possess and therefore challenged anybody that would question his supremacy. Whenever a Koochipoodi Satyabhama threw the gauntlet thus, none would have the courage to accept the challenge, as he is believed to have studied Satyabhama Kalapam (the word is technical) in full and in detail.

The other schools are Narukoori Bhagavatam, Tarigonda Bhagavatam, Potladurti Bhagavatam, Perumatturi Bhagavatam and one or two more whose names I do not remember. All these are equally good in their diction, and the treatment of the incidents of the play is precisly the same, the difference being in lyrics, verses and music alone. The Koochipoodi troupe, being conservatives, aristocratically inclined to some extent as aforesaid, confined themselves to their own Bhagavatam. But all the other Bhagavatams were enacted by various other troupes, and some of them indulged in making a mixture of most of these, always showing proper taste in so doing. Some of these troupes were composed of brahmans, some partly of brahmans and partly non-brahmans, and others, purely of non-brahmans, such as Jangams. A few women also, combined with them to enact women's parts. I consider this a most desirable and happy combination, inasmuch as real grace and naturalness will exist in a play then and then alone. The handsomest and cleverest young man cannot exhibit a tenth of that delicacy and grace which we find in an ordinary woman, because in the latter they are inborn and natural, but in the former initiated, and assumed, artificial. And again this combination saves a lot of trouble and expense in the make-up. I have seen about eight Satyabhamas and Gollabhamas impersonated by women, of course of questionable character under the moral code. But there was no hitch whatsoever and the

thing went on very smoothly and pleasantly, as the anti-nautch—girl fad, was not born then and did not unreasonably interfere with the very few amusements we possess. The last woman—Satyabhama I saw was one Aukali in a troupe of Jangams of Ayanavaram, a village near Madras. She was then about forty years of age and acquitted herself quite well; in fact she was a favourite with the Bhagavatam—going public, as she was a decent singer and dancer, and her appearance was also prepossessing as she had some claim to comeliness. Her delivery of lyrics and verses was splendid because she took special care to articulate each word distinctly. But when it came to prose sentences, which were after all very meagre and could be counted on fingers ends, it was a woeful failure. I may observe that almost all these players of Bhagavatams or any other plays in Telugu or Tamil used to deliver lyrics and verses clearly and audibly; but in prose they failed in the same proportion. Most of them resorted to a sing-song way of utterance in prose which made the delivery rather unnatural and artificial. Probably absence in prose of the measured cadence and caesura found in lyrics and verses, to deliver which they receive special tuition and training and therefore become more accustomed, handicapped them. Whatever the cause was, their prose delivery was generally as bad as their poetry delivery was good. I hope I will be excused when I say that I have oftentimes observed the same sing-song way even in the delivery of some of the educated actors of the present day dramas.

(To be continued.)

CORRESPONDENCE

Portia's Hint to Bassanio.

'Does Portia try to give a clue to Bassanio's selection of the casket ?' is a question which suggests itself to hardly any but the annotator. It might be said that we may suspect the character of Portia, the suspicion being grounded upon several passages in her speech. It might even be supposed by the man of ingenuity that Portia intended Bassanio to mark the word *hazard* in,

> " I pray you tarry : pause a day or two
> Before you *hazard*."

the motto on the leaden casket being

> " Who chooseth me shall give and
> *Hazard* all he hath."

Some again are of opinion that the statement.

> " I could teach you
> How to choose right but I am forsworn."

makes Bassanio more deliberative than he might be expected to be, and that it is intended to lead him to the leaden casket.

Finally, many with some reason too, are disposed to ground their argument upon the song condemning 'fancy,' and the subsequent beginning of Bassanio.

> " So may the outward shows be least themselves."

These scholastic men of suspicion never see that Portia is above suspicion, and that 'divine father' of Portia, Shakepeare, will never sacrifice art, poetry and beauty for the mere sake of the earthly thing called *marriage*.

Every one might have expected a tragedy, for they themselves were prepared for one, resulting from a wrong selection. But happily for Bassanio, he hits upon the right casket more by chance than intimi-

tion or deliberation. He alights upon the threatening meagre lead, whose paleness moves him more than eloquence ; and till the last moment he entertains a doubt of his success, and says,

"joy be the consequence."

Let us be aware of the fact that it would be a sacrilege to Portia and through her to Shakespeare to break, even by an hair's breadth, the vow that Portia made to her loving father at the time of his death.

The artist in Shakespeare warrants us the conclusion that to give a hint to Bassanio by Portia would be un-Shakespearian and un-Portia like, consciously identifying them both with what is highest and noblest in beauty poetry, and art.

—— A STUDENT.

ECHOES FROM EVERYWHERE

THE ADVANCEMENT OF INDIAN MUSIC

It is with very great pleasure that we note the efforts made in various quarters to advance the study and practice of Indian Music. The absence of a systematic teaching of the subject to the youths of this country has been a long regretted feature, and affords the most striking contrast to the care and attention bestowed in that direction in all Western countries. This neglect of the science and art of Indian Music has resulted in its being relegated to a few professional singers and some stray amateurs. All lovers of Indian Art must plead for a wider and wider recognition of its manifold benefits, and strive for a realisation of the ideal—music as a potent force in vivifying and enlivening national life in this country. The English educated Indian has been the worst sinner, in ignoring the claims of this much-prized art and it is hoped that these efforts will be successful, in leading him nearer to its charms. Among the most notable pronouncements on the subject are the Addreses delivered by Mrs. Annie Besant at Madras before the *Sarada Gayana Samaj*, and by His Excellency Sir George-Clarke at the anniversary of a Hindu School of Music in the Bombay Presidency. We also commend to our readers the appeal issued by a Bengali lady now in America, pleading for the revival of long-lost Hindu notes. Our readers will also be interested in the lecture delivered on the subject by Miss Maud Mcarthay of England, who has been a devoted student of Indian Music for the last many years and whose information is based not merely on the study of books, but also on the benefits derived from a course of special travel in this country. We give below extracts from all these striking appeals for the advancement of Indian Music.

MRS. ANNIE BESANT

The following is a report of Mrs. Besant's inaugural address to the Sarada Gayana Sabha of Madras :—

When she was asked to deliver an address in connection with that Association she was at first inclined to answer 'no' owing to the exceedingly heavy work she had had lately. Then it struck her that in India at the present time Indian music had not wholly the place that it ought to occupy in the national development. As a nation began to lift its head, as an ancient nation that had been sleeping began to revive, the new spirit expressed itself in many ways, naturally in political life, in social organisations, and in endeavouring to reform any abuses that may have grown up with

the efflux of time. But a national development would be incomplete and national life would not be wholly expressed unless one of its methods of manifestation was that of art and the cultivation of the sense of beauty in individual and in national life. Looking abroad at the works of the Great Artificer, one would find that everywhere they were marked by beauty. Where beauty was absent in any manifestation that manifestation was imperfect and was lacking in an essential attribute. She would lay down as the general canon of life that the beautiful was essential to help that development. Everywhere and in all ages man had sought the beautiful, so strong was his desire for it, so resolute was his determination that if he could not find it in parts approved of for virtue and morality, he would seek it in parts, undesirable and harmful. Hence it was wisdom to cultivate that love so that it may tend to the happiness and the purity of human life. Taking one form of art, music, it had been looked down upon and despised and the result was that it had very largely fallen into undesirable hands. Young men seeking for relaxation in the direction of melodious sounds were almost compelled to take hand in hand with music company of the most undesirable and the most corrupt. In musical entertainments the singers engaged were known to be of bad character and recognised as living impure lives and one of the points of reform which had very often been urged in the abolition of nautch was based on that fact. Wherever they found the nautch there they had the direct encouragement for immorality. Naturally young men desiring to hear music took it where they could get it and it was not their fault so much as the fault of their elders, if music came to them hand in hand with evil company instead of being associated with the noblest and most inspiring ideals.

Something of late years had been done to raise music from the disreputable association into which it had fallen. They should not forget that there was entirely another line of Indian music which was knit with the holiest of Associations, namely religion. The singer was a man of high and pure character and the religious feelings were drawn from among the sacred books of India. But they could not always press on the young minds nothing but that which was connected with religion. Young men should also be allowed to have lighter forms of amusement, along with forms of emotion and of thought which gratified them without injuring their taste. In England and other occidental countries an actor or actress was a short time ago regarded as outside the pale of a respectable society. It had gone through stages somewhat similar to the stage of degradation of music. There was a time of Medieval Europe when all dramas were religious and they were used as the means of instruction for the ignorant masses and stories were taken from the life of Christ or of some saint. From that point where it was connected with religion, it sank down to a position of social ostracism and out of that it was gradually reviving; and highly educated men were beginning to take part in dramatic performances and women of good character went upon the stage. Drama in Europe was now raised to a position of respectability and of honour. Titles of honour were now bestowed on actors. Young girls and boys were allowed to go with their parents and elders to attend theatrical perfor-

mances. If that was so in England in a comparatively short space of time something might be done for music in India. Music might be rescued from its evil associations. That could only be done when the higher class of society stepped forward in order to elevate music and to give music of the best and noblest character, purify it from all associations with evil surroundings and evil living. An attempt was to be made not only to improve music without unpleasant associations, and to make music accessible to all as part of liberal education but to elevate it to some extent on to a more scientific basis. Any one who knew Indian music knew it was profoundly scientific. But there were certain things that the Indians should borrow from the West to make the teaching of music a good deal more accessible to persons desirous of learning it than at present by introducing a system of notation which would enable the melody to be written down intelligibly and learnt more easily, by making it a matter of the eye as well as of the ear and in that way very much fecilitate the mastery of music. In the Central College, Benares, where music was part of education especially among the younger boys, she watched the way in which the Music Pandit taught music and she could not but think that the system of teaching would be enormously better if there was some system of notation instead of boys being asked to copy the phrases sung by the teacher. In the music school at Lahore a particular method of time-keeping was already borrowed from the West and children were taught to sing together and produce notes exactly in the same way and in definite order.

Apart from the system of notation, there were some points of principle that she would like to draw their attention to. Certain principles of Western music should be assimilated into Indian music without in any sense of denationalising the latter music or without its losing the power which was given to it from hundreds of generations and which made Indian music unique among the various kinds of music in the world. In India they found a larger number of musical notes than in the West. Where in the West they had a tone, in India they had half-tones and quarter-tones. They did not exist in any European instrument. An ordinary Englishman hearing Indian music for the first time did not have a favourable opinion of it. He thought it was all flat. The Western ear was not accustomed to the very delicate grades of tone of the Indian music. He would think that the note was not truly struck, because he would judge from his own standpoint. The Indian ear by generations of Indian music had been trained to greater susceptibilities. In the West, modern music was slowly winning its way, and they were introducing half-tones and other intermediate tones into their music. The value of half-tones and other intermediate tones was being more and more appreciated and Indians should not give up their nationality in music. Harmonium, a Western musical instrument should not be introduced into Indian schools, because if that was done, Indian music would be destroyed. The Western notes were utterly against the voice that accompanied them on the Indian soil. The harmonium could not produce the delicate notes of the Veena or the other Indian instruments; there was not the same objection with regard to violin. The piano and the organ like the harmonium were not suitable for

Indian music. The organ was a magnificent instrument capable of producing marvellous sounds, but they should not try to apply Indian music to the organ. There was also something to be appreciated in Western music. Its possibilities should be studied by the Indian musician.

* * *

She was not a sufficiently scientifically trained musician to be able to say how far Indians might add to some of their music by using the harmony of the West. A great deal of attention, time and trouble should be spent upon that subject to produce the various combinations of notes used in the West. Western music had great orchestral combinations, while Indian music had exquisite melody. In summing up the lecture she said that the Indian girls should be taught music on Indian lines with a view to preserve the noblest and most characteristic features of Indian music. They should learn from the West anything the West may have to teach them. They should learn to add and not to substitute. They should not lose the spiritual in grasping the emotional, although emotion and spirit were integral parts of human nature and neither should be ignored and neither should be dwarfed. They should try to preserve that subtle unique spiritual movement, which it was their privilege to give to the world at large. They should also throw their music into conformity with Western music so that others also might be able to reproduce the same. Whatever was beautiful in music, painting or in sculpture in the East or West should be added to the other each preserving the national quality and characteristics.

SIR GEORGE CLARKE

Speaking at the distribution of prizes, to the pupils of the Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya, His Excellency said:—Ever since I came to India I have been much interested in Indian music, which was unknown to me before. I suppose that almost all human beings are affected in some degree by music as are many animals, most birds and even some insects. And if one has any knowledge of music of one kind, it must at least give one the wish to understand other kinds which appeal to other peoples. It is a mistake to assume that the musical taste of the Western nations differs absolutely from that of East. The sounds of the Scottish pipe and the airs which have been handed down through generations of Highlanders appeal strongly to Pathan mountaineers on the frontiers of India, and a Mahratta Regiment can find pleasure in its pipes which find band cannot give. The pipe, it may be said, does not represent Western music and has no joys for many Western people; but airs born among the Scottish mountains have not been disdained by great composers who have linked them with music of a widely different type. The music of the West has however followed lines of evolution which have no counterpart in India. It has changed its character in a marked degree in the last two centuries and it is changing still. It has become a highly organized pursuit with vast numbers of societies actively engaged in extending the scope of its influence. Its professors are held in high honour, and it offers some great prizes to its votaries. It is no longer the pastime of the few, but has become almost a necessity to the many, who demand and find increasing enjoyment in it. The music of the Western peoples has thus followed their social and political development becoming an organized force as they become organized nations in the

full sense of the word. In the evolution of Western music religion has played a most important part, and there can be no doubt that conversely music, has powerfully stimulated religious sentiment and has helped towards the realization of the divine. As yet this cannot at all be said of Eastern music. Organization and co-ordination have been too much wanting, and while the people of India have a very keen musical sense and can be deeply affected by their native art, the profession of music has not always been held in esteem which must have operated as a discouragemet to musical progress. There are already signs of change in this respect. Proficiency in music is no longer regarded as appertaining to a special professional class but is being sought after in many quarters. As amateur musicians grow in number not only will the importance of music as a social factor increase, but musical study will extend far with results which will react upon the art as a whole. A literature cannot exist until writing has been perfected, and musical evolution in India has been hampered by the want of improved methods of recording and thus of permanently preserving its forms. Until a general and thoroughly scientific system of musical notation had been arrived at, real progress was impossible in Western countries which now have a rich and extensive musical literature. That also is a problem which is beginning to be attacked in India, and will be solved if the study of music tends more and more to attract the best brains of the people.

A COMPLEX STRUCTURE

Except in one sense, the structure of Indian music, like the alphabetical characters of the East, is much more complex than that which has been evolved in Western countries, and partly for that reason we Europeans find your music difficult to understand. You have perhaps a more delicate sense of musical form than is given to us. Vocal music with you takes a more important place than with us and your ideas of tone differ widely from ours. Though you have many fine instruments, they do not approach the striking variety of tone which is to be found in a great orchestra, and which is used with tremendous effect according to our ideas, to produce musical impressions. In the direction of harmony, the West has gone much further than the East and is still moving. It is in the structure of its harmony that western music is more complex than yours. This difference of musical taste, however it may have arisen, has had important results. In the absence of concerted music the co-operation of large numbers of voices or of instruments in producing joint effects powerfully reacting upon performers as well as audiences cannot find a place in the musical education of the Indian people.

Whether concerted music may in time be developed on Indian lines I do not know; but meanwhile Indians cannot adequately realise the exaltation of spirit, the excitement and the vivid impressions which are created by the noble choruses of a Handel oratorio, by the symphonies of the great European masters, and even by the choral singing of a regiment on the march or of a gathering of Welsh holiday-makers. I confess that to my mind this seems to be a want in the music of India, and I think that a movement which would make Indian music into a uniting force and would vastly extend the number of individuals who could come under its sway at the same moment must be an advantage. Such a movement may well arise if India progresses towards real

nationhood as we all desire, and it would be alike the proof of and a helping cause towards that nationhood.

DEVOTIONAL SIDE

Among most peoples music has been regarded as partaking of the Divine, and in the East as in the West it has its purely devotional side. Some of the saints of India have sought to turn music to account to promote religious progress and to help to raise the people above things material. But here also lack of organization has hindered full development. The musical services of the cathedrals of Europe have for several centuries served as inspiring models of religious music to which the greatest composers have contributed, while organ builders vied in producing instruments capable of giving the fullest expression to their harmonies. The value of such standards of devotional music cannot be overestimated in their effect upon the solemnity of the services of the Christian churches.

To an Indian it must be difficult to understand all that is implied in Milton's fine lines in "Ill Penseroso."

There let the pealing organs blow
To the full-voiced quire below
In service high and anthems clear
As many with sweetness, through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecst a sies
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes"

Nothing is better calculated to lift us above the mechanical and material aspects of our lives, to speak straight to our hearts and spirit and to evoke the sense of the divine than good music. It has been said that the ancient Greeks, who were in many respects a wise people made a point of teaching their children music, because they believed that it helped them not to be self-willed and fanciful, but to see the beauty of order, the usefulness of rule and the divinity of law. Music has in the past played a part in the education of the people of India. I believe that it may do much more in the future if it is made an object of reverential study thrown open to far greater numbers than at present and if it is allowed to take its proper place as an elevating influence. That is just what this institution is aiming at, and I cordially wish the fullest measure of success to its endeavours.

SRIMATHI SATHYABALA DEVI

Srimathi Sathyabala Devi of Bengal now at 295, East, 162 Street, New York, sends this appeal to the Indian papers on behalf of Hindu Music :

The people of India, and particularly of Bengal will never forget the scholarly efforts of Raja Sourindra Mohan Tagore, who spent a vast fortune in trying to systematize the music of India. To his great personality and those of the illustrious ladies and gentlemen of Bengal, who worked in the same line, the partial preservation of this elegant branch of Hindu science and refined art is indebted.

Greece and Rome lost their music so completely, that while trying to study the history of European music,I fail to find anything about the music that Minerva played.

All the nations of the world owe their music to India. On his return from the invasion of India, Alexander the Great took with him a musician and a physician from the Punjab—India.

I am now concerned with the lost melodies and music of the old masters of India. The last occasion when all the melodies and music of the old masters, was correctly and completely played and sung, was at the court of Emperor Akbar, who had heard Ramdas in Brindaban and Tansen and Gopal Naik in Delhi.

The few melodies that Raja Sourindra Mohan Tagore preserved from this stock are not complete. It is impossible to bring out the proper effect of some of this music, unless the musicians know how to construct "Vina," and play music on the instrument.

It is a wonderful feat of memory, that these numerous melodies and the fine expressions involved in their proper execution, should have been transmitted from memory for thousands of years. The same wonderful memory of the Brahmans that transmitted Sanskrit Grammar, Philosophy and polite literature of all kinds, transmitted the music of Sam Veda and numerous other melodies for which they traced divine origin. In the time of Emperor Akbar, efforts were made by that learned monarch to systematize this music, but as no one believed in the help of notation in these days, the efforts failed. The music was hence confined to the family of Tansen, and was transmitted in that family only. If others got it, it was what the descendants of Tansen chose to give them, and they as a rule never chose to give out much. It is this stock of music, confined to the family of Tansen, that chance threw in my way—a helpless Bengali lady.

I now know the correct construction of the Viña and its proper tuning, a zealous secret of the Tansen family; and I am desirous of teaching the same to my sisters and brethren in Bengal. I also know the correct pitch of the scale of music as Tansen observed, which has power and effect on the human soul. I have collected 3,300 pieces of music of the old masters, including Brahmanas of the Sam Veda period, and such musicians as Gopal Naik, Ramdas, Boiju Naik, Tansen, Chirju Naik Dhadu Naik, Monorango, Bilaskhan and numerous other musicians who flourished both in Northern and Southern India. I have set all this music to notation by my own efforts on Vina, and this stock being the lost history of the music of India, ought to be preserved in the interests of the humanity in general, and India in particular.

Good deal of time and money have hitherto been wasted in writing learned treatises on the theory of Hindu music, while the real music, the soul-touching wonderful compositions of the old masters, have been kept as secrets by the very few knowing them. It is necessary that all this music should be thrown open to the public, that it may be learnt and perpetuated.

Our temples of worship are being deserted, for we have lost our beautiful and soul-stirring church music. Our homes are desolate without music. Our men seek music in low surroundings, while the proper person to sing is either a mother, daughter or a wife.

Lift up your glorious music and give it a proper place in your home. Do not make outcaste of your music—the music that god Mahadeo and goddesses Parvati and Saraswati gave you. My heart aches, that only non-Hindus should have that, which your gods and goddesses gave you.

* * *

MISS MAUD MacCARTHY

The following is the report of a lecture delivered by Miss Maud MacCarthy the well-known violinist who is interesting herself in Indian Music, at a recent meeting of the *India Society* in London: She said that so different from European music is the construction of Indian music that Europeans on first hearing it are considerably perturbed because they are not able to distinguish, first, any "time," nor, secondly, any "tune"; yet in both these respects it has long been highly

developed. Any help from European musicians towards its further evolution might, perhaps, be through suggesting some more scientific way of writing it down, and thus permanently preserving it and through stimulating Indians, who are inclined to become indifferent, to have faith in their national art. The highest development of music in India is vocal not instrumental, and in melody rather than harmony. There are many fine and varied instruments ; and Miss MacCarthy thought that perhaps instrumental music in the form of concerted music might be carried a good deal further. The introduction of the harmonium into India has been a disaster : in Europe its uselessness for musical purposes has long been recognised, and it has been set aside ; but Indians have largely adopted it, to the degeneration of their musical sense, and the use of it should be resolutely discouraged.

European musical tune is simple as compared with Indian. The former consists in the repetition of equal beats ; the latter in the repetition not of a beat, but of a collection of unequal beats—a time-phrase, or tala or bar—which recurs throughout the piece. The beats are unequal, but the sequence of beats within the tala is always the same. To put it in another way : there is equality of pattern, and not as in European music—equality of the threads of a pattern. In European music, time-phrases are constructed, and are varied within the limits of a piece ; while in Indian music, the one time-phrase is repeated throughout. But above this basic time-figure which is usually played on one or two small drums, the stringed instrument may weave another and harmonious time-pattern, and above that again, the singer's voice may construct yet another ; so that the complication is comparable to what we in the West produce by harmony of tones, but is in a field entirely new to us. The tonal effects given on the drums by finger-taps, where each finger has its special quality, are also new and strange to us. In listening to Indian music, therefore, it is indispensable, first, to find out the tala or bar on which it is constructed, and then we may begin to appreciate its fine art.

The tune also is difficult for Europeans to grasp. In our music we are frequently moving from key to key : the most important note—the key-note—keeps shifting its place. In Indian music one key is adhered to, sometimes for hours, and to listen to this is at first a strain on European nerves. In European music the highest development has been in harmony. In a symphony by a great orchestra may be met every possible variety of chord—the richest and fullest harmonies of many tones sounding together. Indian music employs one sound, and endeavours to get by concentration that ecstasy we get by activity. Again, as regards the modes : we have only two and a less important third ; in Indian music there are seventy-two. When it happens to be played in one of the modes we know we are able to appreciate it at once ; but when as is most likely, it is in one of the other sixty-nine, it seems to us strange and, indeed, wrong. The octave has seven notes with semi-tones like our own ; but occasionally at fixed times quarter-tones may be used, and there are twenty-two such quarter-tones recognised. But the tunes are written in special arrangements of notes within the scale, called "ragas" ; these are almost infinite in number as are chords in European music, but the definite

psychological and emotional effects of each are known. Many of them are associated with different hours of the day or night ; and it is a favourite subject of Indian painters to illustrate these ragas with the appropriate setting they call up.

After the lecture, the lights were lowered, and Miss MacCarthy, dimly shining through the fire-lit dusk in her yellow sari and her garland of flowers, sang several songs to the accompaniment of the tambouri. They were all religious, and mainly from South India. To many English persons present they called up visions of past days in India and of wandering singers heard there ; and no doubt to the Indian part of the audience they gave the joy of deeper and more intimate memories.

JOTTINGS BY JOE

I learn from excellent authority that Mr. P. Sambandam is proposing to revise all his old dramas and re-issue them as social dramas. I take it, some changes would be found necessary.

* * *

It is rumoured that on behalf of another aspiring dramatist four vernacular shorthand writers are scouring the country for collecting bits of real talk to serve as rough material for the fine fabric of a new social drama now in the fire along with many other irons. Let all beware who are nervous to appear on the stage.

* * *

I hear that the many friends of Mr. V.V. Srinivasa Aiyengar complimented him on the quite natural way in which he acted his part as 'Swaminathan' the brother of the heroine in 'Golden Fetters.' I noticed he was well dressed, ordered his carriage frequently and joked with his sister—three things which I suppose he does every day at home. How easy it seems to win laurels on the stage !

* * *

Annoyed at the numerous and incessant complaints made against a dramatic conductor directly and indirectly in regard to his distribution of characters, I hear he has finally hit upon a new plan which he has no doubt will be seen to be perfectly fair and faultless. He has, it seems, resolved to cast lots for most of the characters. A strikingly original idea !

OUR CRITIC

I

The Christmas Performances of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha

1. *Varudhini* by Mr. Ramamoorthi was the first performance with which the *Suguna Vilasa Sabha* began its Christmas Season this year. The association of the plot with one of the masterpieces of Telugu Literature, and the large number of fine poetical pieces strewn all over the play, invest it with very real advantages. Mr. A Krishnasamiah acted the heroine, with commendable ability and produced a striking effect with his songs. In the long scene in which Varudhini tries to lure the innocent Brahman to the attractions of Love, his powers were put to the test and he came out with remarkable success. Mr. S. Vencatachala Aiyar did full justice to the part of the Brahman householder who is subjected to sweet temptations but remains unscathed. A tendency towards monotony however introduced a feeling of tedium at least in the long scene of the play. The author who acted the hero sustained his part with good attention to the needs of the various situations, though he found it difficult to get himself absolutely rid of a certain slight artificiality of manner in action as well as speech. We cannot

omit making a reference to Mr. Balasundaram and Mr. Vadivelu, who as the representatives of a wild tribe, brought down the house in roars of laughter, delivering the songs with a faithfulness and sympathy, which few could command.

2. The next performance was *The Eye of Love* of Mr. P. Sambandam, B.A., B.L., and we must confess frankly, it was not a success. A play with an undue preponderance of the farcical element, an almost utter negation of characterisation and a plot without any depth or subtlety, the *Eye of Love* is not quite suited to the purposes of serious stage-presentation. A few interludes seem to be the best means of representing the scenes of *Eye of Love* which have undoubtedly a great fund of boisterous humour. We have however no hesitation in saying that the first scene of the play, with Mohamed Shah and his dissipated courtiers, was a success of which any theatrical troupe might be proud. The effect was achieved not merely by an attempt at a faithful representation of the dress and other details connected with the Oriental Court, but also by the very superior acting of Mr. T. V. Raghavacharlu, B.A., B.L. of Bellary who portrayed admirably all the licentious langour and royal indifference of the Sultan. The hero and heroine, who were represented by Messrs. Sambandam and Rangavadivelu respectively, had very few opportunities, but the love scene in which the bouquets are exchanged, was acted with grace and naturalness—though the heroine was unfortunately prevented by a bad cold from doing justice to the music which fell to her share. The other characters hardly need any special reference, except Zulfikir, who forgot his high station in the court and was dangerously near the usual clown on the stage. We admit the author has not given Zulfikir any heroism or even sense of honour to represent, but we do not know if the humour and behaviour of the most cowardly courtier has not still in it appreciable indications of high life. A special word of praise must be reserved for the scenic arrangements of the garden scene in the play.

3. Mr. D. Krishnamacharlu's *Savitri* came next, and the noble story of a wife's faithfulness was again brought before a large audience. The intensity and passion of Mr. A. Krishnasawmia's action suited admirably the trials of Savitri after her husband's death and it was not the fair sex alone that was touched by the expressions of quivering sorrow and despair. Chitrasva was acted by Mr. Ramamoorthi who had rather a difficult part to sustain, which required not merely all the quickness and expressiveness he could command, but something more. It was an interesting study to watch Mr. T. V. Raghavacharlu's superb success as the saintly father, blind and suffering in the forests—especially to those who had seen him represent a wicked tyrant sometime back. Mr. W. Duraiswami as Sumali supplied the comic element of the play with his usual heartiness and gusto.

4. The series of performances was closed by Mr. P. Sambandam's *Sarangadhara* which compensated largely for the somewhat poor success which had attended the previous Tamil performance. The difficulties of personating the innocence and playfulness of boyhood—that we take it, is the predominating note in the hero—were surmounted in a remarkable manner by Mr. P. Sambandam. The heroine, Mr. Rangavadivelu again, was a great success in the temptation scene—the charms were exercised with a sweetness and intensity, which must have won all hearts weaker than Sarangadara's.

In Mr. T. Srinivasaraghavan, the hero had a faithful friend whose timely warnings were conveyed with profound feeling, though in vain—the action being really touching at the end. Messrs. Damodaram and Sankaran set the audience in constant laughter, the former by his jokes and the latter by his simple exhibitions of humour. We have also to notice the success of Mr. Padmanabha Row in acting the part of the hero's good mother.

The Christmas season was on the whole a success and we congratulate the two conductors, Mr. Sambandam and Mr. Venkataramaniah on the success which has attended their efforts.

II

PRITHI RAI, by the *Sumano Ranjana Samajam* of Triplicane. Victoria Public Hall, Sunday, 22nd January.

We congratulate the members of this new Amateur Dramatic Society, on their idea of staging an historical play with the plot of the remarkable incidents associated with Prithi Rai. The author Mr. Namasivaya Mudaliar has taken advantage of the several dramatic situtations presented by the story and has been particularly successful in his humorous passages and in the introduction of varied ideas in the conversation of the characters. The performance on the 22nd January was very creditable for a Society which has but just come into existence, though there were evidently signs of non-preparation and want of an adequate number of rehearsals. The young gentleman who acted the part of Chand Bard was a success, not merely in his fine music, but in the ease of his action. The hero's royal bearing and dignity were real assets and Mr. K. Srinivasan, B.A., L.T. went through his part with care and precision. We were also immensely pleased by the sense in which the robbers are seen together preliminary to an exercise of their activities.

III

THE SARASA VINODINI SABHA.

This Amateur Dramatic Society of Bellary had a very successful session in Madras during the months of December and January. The audiences drawn by their performances seem to have attained quite a record in numbers. The literary elegance of Mr. D. Krishnamacharlu's plays is a very great attraction and students of Telugu literature at least have a great store of pleasure in their being put on the stage. We have nothing but admiration for the clearness and strength of enunciation which is uniformly displayed by all the actors of the Society and we wish this aspect is copied by the other exponents of the Drama in southern India. We might be allowed to suggest that there is room for improvement in ease and naturalness of movement and in the production of greater expressiveness in action. The details of costume and ornament might be looked to with a keener eye to artistic effect.

IV

SAILBAD THE SINER by the *Madras Dramatic Society*, at the Museum Theatre 25th January 1911.

We have very great pleasure in welcoming this new pantomime by Mr. W. R. Warden of the Madras Dramatic Society. The conception of an isle in the Bosphorus, haunted by an evil genius who is opposed by a realm of fairies has afforded the author ample scope for dealing with the strange and the mystic. We congratulate Mr. Warden on the general vastness of the design and on his success in associating it with humour and various spicy aspects of modern social life. The allusions to several topical subjects invest it with a significance not usually attached to a pantomime. With the music composed by Mr. C. M. Lindsaye, the pantomime was staged for several nights with great success by the Madras Dramatic Society. Mr. Warden

won rounds of applause by his humour, but we are not quite sure if he was not overdoing his part even for a pantomime. He found a worthy companion in the 'Widow Bagg' whose boisterous merriment had naturally to be represented by a man. The effectiveness of Mr. Ogden's action as the cruel old man of the Isle, raised the pantomime to a serious performance, and he portrayed wickedness and evil passion with admirable vigour. A Caliban with the powers of Prospero—that we take it, is the Old man of the Isle, Mr. Ogden's action would have been worthy of a great tragedy. *Boy Blue* and the *Princess* and *Nancy* won the hearts of the audience by their tenderness and display of musical talent while Mrs. Goodal's personation of the Good Fairy was also fairly good. The Amazons and the Sailors, and the crazy Old King introduced new elements of varied interest into the pantomime, which, with the additional attraction of excellent scenic arrangements was a great success indeed.

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"All art constantly aspires to the condition of music."—*Walter Pater*.

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"Both the Theatre and the Child are in danger of being discussed too much in these days and both of them would benefit by being left alone for a while by persons who know nothing whatever about them."—*William Purvis*.

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"It is only the drama that has lagged, crushed under the weight of stage properties. But it is rising, it will he radiant, it is invulnerable, as all the arts, are, while our faith survives."—*T. Martin Wood.*

OUR BOUQUET

TO ACTORS

Signor Salvini, the famous Italian actor writes in the *Century Magazine*, giving advice to a young aspirant in the dramatic art. Before giving ourself entirely to the art, one must ask himself the questions Am I endowed with a good figure and an expressive countenance ? Have I a strong, vibrating, and flexible voice, which will adapt itself to the various feelings and passions I will have to express ? Am I cultivated enough to interpret the thought of various authors ?

Not only should he fulfil all these conditions but also possess a knowledge of the classics. He must be conversant with Homer, Ossian, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Hugo and many others.

He should read his part over and over from beginning to end, without dwelling on any particular speech or scene. By doing this he will obtain a thorough knowledge of the character as a whole, and will soon perceive the salient points from which effects should be soberly drawn. This repeated reading must not be allowed to bore himself, as it will give him such mastery over his part that not a word will be lost to him, and it will become to him as his own creation.

He should also train his voice, and see that it becomes resonant and well modulated. The part should be read aloud, so as to see whether the tone of the voice, in expressing a given sentiment, is correct or not. All gestures should be determined and significant.

The actor's task requires a plastic movement, a clear diction, an expressive face, and a well-adapted figure. The step should be firm, the arm should move from the shoulder and not from the elbow, the hands should be kept half-closed, and

the fingers should never be apart, and, lastly the voice should never pitch to falsetto. If a would-be actor, after having received advice and counsel, cannot amend himself, he had better renounce the career.

Referring to the make-up of an actor Salivini says: "It will be always advisable to frequent picture-galleries, to examine carefully the paintings which show the character one wishes to represent, to consult works on the wearing-apparel of his time, and to peruse illustrated periodicals. As regards modern and invented characters, common sense and good taste ought to be one's chief guide."

He continues: "It is a delusion to think that intelligence and personality are all that one requires to obtain same. An actor may have an excellent method, a fine voice, and great intelligence, but if he has not also physical qualities, his successes will not go beyond a little approval, he will not carry away his audience, and the public will class him among the good but not among the best.

"An actor ought to realise what he can or cannot represent, and should abstain from parts for which he is not adopted. Legendary and heroic characters like Saul, Samson, the Gladiator, Ingomar?Hercules, and the Moor of Venice require a massive figure and a powerful voice. It is most important that an actor should realise his strong and his weak points. The field of dramatic art is so wide and fertile that a good actor can always choose the part adapted to him.

"In conclusion, I should like to impress on my fellow-actors, especially the younger ones, with the importance of not being improvident."

DRAMATIC NEWS

SUGUNA VILASA SABHA

The members of the Sabha gave an entertainment on the 29th January 1911 to the Hon'ble Mr. V. Krishnaswami Iyer and the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sundara Iyer on their elevation to the high offices to which they have been appointed. After refreshments, a varied programme of music and recitation was gone through followed by a rendering of "Sabhapathi"—a farce in Tamil. After that a series of Tableaux Vivants entitled "On the throne of the gods" was exhibited and closed with "A Vision of the Twentieth century" showing Britannia clasping Mother India by the hand. After a short bioscope exhibition, the guests were thanked and the function terminated.

There will be a performance of a comic opera in Telugu entitled "Vidhileka Vaidyudu" by the members of the Sabha on Sunday the 19th February at 6 P.M.

In aid of the Edward Memorial Fund and under the kind patronge of the Hon'ble Sir Murray Hammick, K. C. S. I., there will be a performance of the adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet in Tamil on Saturday the 25th February 1911 at 5-30 P.M.

SUKRITHA LAKSHMI VILASA SABHA

We have the pleasure to announce the following performances by this Sabha during February 1911 :—

11th February 1911 at 9 p. m.—*Aladdin* in Tamil.

18th February 1911 at 9 p. m.—*Silakalyanam* in Telugu.

27th February 1911 at 9 p. m.—*Nandanar* in Tamil.